



**Town of Arlington, Massachusetts**  
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## **Budget Minutes & timeline 06/17/2008**

*Approved July 22, 2008*

***The Arlington School Committee  
Budget Subcommittee Meeting  
Tuesday, June 17 2008***

**Members present:**

Ron Spangler, Chair  
Joe Curran  
Denise Burns

**Also present:**

Richard Fanning, Finance Committee  
Nate Levenson, Superintendent

The meeting was called to order at 5:07 PM.

On a motion by Mr. Curran, seconded by Mr. Spangler, it was VOTED 2-0 to approve the minutes of the May 21<sup>st</sup> Budget Subcommittee meeting. Having been absent on May 21<sup>st</sup>, Ms. Burns abstained.

**EdNets**

Mr. Levenson and Mr. Spangler reported on their meeting the previous evening with Richard Trembowicz and Bill Conners of EdNets – OurKidsWin! EdNets is a communication platform including websites, email, SMS, and voice that is designed to improve parent communication and participation in education and fundraising. It includes click-through shopping with participating internet merchants and an in-store loyalty program each, of which generates revenue through rebates for the schools.

Arlington had shown early interest in this program, and the School Committee looked into it in detail about two years ago, but at the time EdNets had not signed up any districts and Arlington declined to be the first adopter. Mr. Levenson and Mr. Spangler reported that EdNets now has eight districts using their platform, but they haven't been up and running long enough to validate the six-figure revenue projections EdNets has made. The largest check received by any district so far is just \$2300.

Mr. Spangler said that it will not be easy to get all Arlington stakeholders onboard for a program like this, and we ought to wait until the uncertainty over the payback is further reduced, i.e. when some other district starts realizing significant revenues from EdNets. This is consistent with the earlier Committee's conclusions that it is too soon to take this major step.

On a motion by Ms. Burns, seconded by Mr. Curran, it was VOTED 3-0 not to act on the EdNets proposal this year, but to revisit EdNets in a year's time.

**GIC**

Mr. Levenson and Ms. Burns reported on the initial meeting between the Town, Schools, and various union leaders on entering the Commonwealth's Group Insurance Commission plan, as authorized by Governor Patrick's Municipal Partnership Act.

Mr. Levenson reminded the attendees that 70% of Arlington's union membership must approve before this can happen. If and when it does, it could provide an immediate \$2 million savings on insurance costs (of which \$1 million might come to the schools), as well as lower cost growth rates in future years.

Mr. Spangler asked what the chances are that this will happen in time for the FY10 budget. Ms. Burns said there is an October 1<sup>st</sup> deadline, and both Ms. Burns and Mr. Levenson said it is too soon to tell if that deadline can be met. Ms. Burns said the unions came to the table open-minded.

#### **FY10 Budget Adoption Process**

Mr. Spangler presented a draft timeline for the preparation and review of the FY10 budget. The subcommittee discussed the pros and cons of public outreach in the fall of this year, what goals might be set, and how it might best be accomplished. No agreement could be reached, so that component of Mr. Spangler's proposed timeline was eliminated.

Mr. Fanning of the Finance Committee asked that the School Committee vote a bottom line operating budget earlier than the proposed January 13<sup>th</sup> date. Mr. Spangler asked when the health insurance numbers would come in (notwithstanding any decision on the GIC), and Mr. Fanning said some time in December.

Mr. Spangler noted that the school department bottom line has been set by formula under the current 5 year plan, with the only uncertainty being the impact of insurance cost increases, so once those are known any Committee vote is merely a rubber stamp. Mr. Levenson and Ms. Burns suggested that things might be different since FY10 is the final year of that 5 year plan.

Ms. Burns noted that the School Committee will not meet between December 9<sup>th</sup> and January 13<sup>th</sup>, so the latter date is probably the soonest it can take a vote anyway.

On a motion by Ms. Burns, seconded by Mr. Curran, it was VOTED 3-0 to recommend the FY10 Budget Timeline attached as Exhibit A to the full committee.

#### **Next Meeting**

In accordance with the recommended timeline, Mr. Spangler asked that the committee look into user fees and fundraising in support of athletics at its next meeting. He asked the Superintendent to provide data on sources of funding, by program, for all fee-supported programs, as follows

Program	Total Cost	Funding From	Operating Budget	Grants	User Fees
		Other Sources	Instrumental Music		
					Full Day Kindergarten
	Boys Hockey				
	Girls Lacrosse				
	Etc...				

Mr. Spangler also asked Mr. Curran how the subcommittee might approach the topic of increasing revenues in support of athletic programs. Both Mr. Curran and Ms. Burns felt that there are no untapped sources of revenue there. There are some concerns over how the money is being spent, but Ms. Burns suggested that this is an issue for the Policies and Procedures subcommittee to look into. Mr. Spangler and Mr. Curran agreed.

The next meeting of the Budget Subcommittee was tentatively set for July 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7pm.

On a motion by Mr. Curran, seconded by Ms. Burns, it was VOTED 3-0 to adjourn the meeting at 6:24 PM.

*The Arlington School Committee  
Budget Subcommittee  
Tuesday June 17, 2008*

It is the policy of the Arlington Public Schools that the school department budget shall be prepared and reviewed in accordance

with a timetable established by the School Committee.

**Proposed FY10 Budget Timeline, Recommended by the Budget Subcommittee:**

June—September	Budget Subcommittee and Administration research selected areas of revenue enhancement and cost reduction
June 24 <sup>th</sup>	Superintendent walks through the major components that will drive the FY10 budget deficit
September 15 <sup>th</sup>	The Superintendent provides the Arlington School Committee with an overview of the FY10 budget deficit
November 10 <sup>th</sup>	Survey of community priorities
January 13 <sup>th</sup>	School Committee votes bottom line FY10 operating budget
January—February	Budget Subcommittee PTO roadshow
February 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Budget Subcommittee FY10 Budget Forum (Tentative)
February 10 <sup>th</sup>	Superintendent and School Committee review the Administration's draft FY10 budget proposal(s)
February 13 <sup>th</sup> —20 <sup>th</sup>	Online community survey on specific FY10 budget choices
February 24 <sup>th</sup>	Public hearing on proposed FY10 budget (at regular SC meeting) Budget Subcommittee presents survey results
March 10 <sup>th</sup>	School Committee adoption of FY10 budget
May	Budget presented to Town Meeting